

PLANNING STAFF REPORT
JEFFERSON CITY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
November 17, 2016

Case No. P16021 – East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Plan. Request filed by the Housing Authority of the City of Jefferson, Missouri, to review conformity of the proposed East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Plan with the City’s general plan and provide recommendations to the Land Clearance Authority and City Council. The Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners adopted the proposed East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Plan at their meeting on October 25, 2016 (Cynthia, Quetsch, Executive Director; John S. (Jack) Pletz, General Counsel).

Nature of the Request

As stated in the document submitted by the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority (LCRA) “the purposes of the East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Plan, are to present the findings and condition of blight in the East Capitol Avenue study area, shown on Exhibit A, Boundary Map, and Exhibit B, Parcel Locator; and to present the plan for the urban renewal project to mitigate or eliminate the conditions of blight in the area.”

The LCRA, as the City’s redevelopment agency, prepared the East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Plan, at the direction of the City Council (Ordinance No. 15567, approved September 20, 2016). Section 99.430 RSMo provides that prior to recommending an urban renewal plan to the City Council, the LCRA must submit the plan to the planning agency for review and recommendations as to its conformity with the general plan for the development of the community as a whole. The document was delivered to the City on October 26, 2016. The City’s planning agency must submit its written recommendations with respect to the proposed plan to the LCRA within 30 days of receipt of the plan for review.

Staff Analysis

The City has adopted two plans that are relevant to the study area, the Comprehensive Plan and the Central East Side Plan. Both plans support the findings of the proposed East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Plan.

- Comprehensive Plan. The 1994 Comprehensive Plan Update recommended development of specific neighborhood plans, and also identified the “High/ Chestnut” area as having experienced transformations, started decades ago, that contributed to the neighborhood’s instability. (The High/Chestnut subarea generally extended from Jackson to Benton streets, north of U.S. Hwy 50/63). One of this plan’s suggestions was to employ “redevelopment overlay” districts to encourage revitalization and redevelopment within portions of the now-proposed East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Area
- Central East Side Plan. The Central East Side Plan was adopted in 2004 as the neighborhood plan for the area that includes the East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Area. Stakeholders participated in a “SWOT” Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). Among the weaknesses identified as obstacles to economic development of the neighborhood were absentee landlords, substandard properties, image of poor housing conditions and perception of the area as a crime center.

Both the Capitol Avenue District and the East High Street District sections in the Central East Side Plan indicate that there should be significant renovation to preserve historic structures, along with targeted redevelopment to achieve objectives of reestablishing and revitalizing the neighborhood fabric. Furthermore, the Central East Side Plan encourages the City’s use of various economic development tools to assist and induce private investment in the neighborhood. Missouri’s redevelopment statutes, including Chapter 99 urban renewal, were specifically referenced as available tools to be used in combating blight. These tools were listed in Appendix E of the Central East Side Plan.

Exhibits to Note

- Exhibit H, Parcels Exhibiting Blight Factors, shows parcels identified as (1) having insanitary or unsafe conditions, endangering life or property, and/or dilapidation; and (2) deterioration of site improvements.
- Exhibit I, Land Acquisition Map, denotes properties that may be acquired to further the goals of the Urban Renewal Plan.

History

The East Capitol Avenue environs has been the subject of scrutiny over many years, due to the presence of numerous highly visible, deteriorating properties, in the shadow of the Capitol. Over the years, the area has been the subject of intense code enforcement activity, including mowing tall grass, removing brush, securing doors and windows, building repairs, and demolition. As a result of the inability to incentivize the repair and maintenance of a significant number of structures through typical code enforcement methods, the City looked to a remedy outlined in the Central East Side Plan, and also in the Department's initial Abandoned Building report in 2014, which referenced using powers granted to the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority to acquire blighted properties. A "blight" study was commissioned earlier this year by the City, and funded by the LCRA. The study "Qualifications for Chapter 99 (LCRA) Designation was presented to the LCRA Board of Commissioners by consultant Peckham, Guyton, Albers and Viets (PGAV Planners) on August 16, 2016.

A portion of the study area was included in a prior urban renewal plan, however, upon reviewing the report prepared by PGAV Planners, the LCRA Board of Commissioners subsequently determined that a new urban renewal plan should be prepared to address the conditions. The proposed Urban Renewal Plan for the East Capitol Avenue Area was passed by the Land Clearance Authority on October 25, 2016 and submitted to the City's Department of Planning and Protective Services on October 26, 2016.

Staff Recommendations:

The City of Jefferson will undertake an infrastructure improvement project on Capitol Avenue in 2017, thus addressing the blighting influences due to condition of public infrastructure, such as sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and lack of street lighting. The East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Plan represents the most significant tool, to date, to promote and induce revitalization of the privately-owned site and building conditions within the area. Suggested findings:

1. The East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Plan does conform with the City's general plans.
2. Upon review of exhibits, suggest the following parcels be added to Exhibit I, Land Acquisition Map.
 - Parcels #31 and #33. Including these parcels would promote revitalization of the entire block. Parcel #31 was identified as having conditions of blight. While Parcel #33 is in good condition, not including it, along with Parcel #31, could constrain redevelopment of the block.

Form of Motion

1. Motion to add Parcels #31 and #33 to Exhibit I, Land Acquisition Map, to promote revitalization of the entire block.
2. Motion to find the East Capitol Avenue Urban Renewal Plan does conform with the City's general plans.